

LOCATING GLOBAL RESISTANCE:  
THE LANDSCAPE POETICS OF ARKADII  
DRAGOMOSHCHENKO, LYN HEJINIAN  
AND YANG LIAN

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*What is a landscape  
A landscape is what when they that is I  
See and look.<sup>1</sup>*

**A Global Landscape**

The landscape poetics of Arkadii Dragomoshchenko from the former Soviet Union, Lyn Hejinian from the United States, and Yang Lian 楊煉 from China represent attempts to renegotiate subjectivity in the early to mid 1980s, a time of local and global, social and political change. Their poetry challenges both literary norms and contemporary consciousness, by proposing a consciousness of consciousness, formally and thematically, through the dialectic of “I” and language, person and landscape. This essay uses close readings of “Summa Elegia” (*Summa elegii*) by Dragomoshchenko, *The Guard* by Hejinian, and “Norlang” (*Nuorilang* 諾日朗) by Yang to illuminate the broader political and aesthetic debates, local and global, in which they participate.<sup>2</sup>

The concern with challenging existing values through a consciousness of consciousness relates to the flux in value in their respective societies, the Soviet Union, the United States, and China. Value in China in the 1980s moved from being overtly defined in ideological terms to being dictated by market individualism, under which cultural values were determined by economics and material consumption. The Soviet Union in the 1980s experienced a similar flux in value, while in the United States the decade brought a combination of neo-liberalism and moral conservatism. The convergence in aesthetic and ethical issues in the poetics of the

three writers reflects and anticipates globalisation, in which the movement toward market economics and the increased links with the West of both China and the Soviet Union have played a significant role. The poetry of the three writers is contextually located in local aesthetic politics, but also exhibits a tendency toward a global aesthetic through a common negotiation of value through landscape.

The three poetic works, in their specific cultural and linguistic contexts, transgress boundaries in language as a site of consciousness in landscape. There are important issues at stake when poetry describes a world and places a subject within that world. The poems of all three writers not only make the position of the "I" or human subject in language uncertain but claim a correspondence between this uncertain position and the position of the person in landscape and in society. This is not simply a post-modern collapsing of subjectivity, because by shifting both the "I" and its context, or landscape, the poets seek new ways of writing that are also new ways of thinking, thus enhancing, not subsuming, individual subjectivity. All three writers are attempting to deal with reality in a way that has social and political, as well as literary, implications. Their poetry opposes conservative simplifiers of the relationship of the "I" to the poem, the person to the landscape. At the same time, by insisting on the locating of subjectivity in landscape, these works also resist those who deny the real world through scepticism and subjectivism, a position that is often associated with postmodernism. The poetry of Yang, Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian, as well as challenging existing values, attempts to redefine subjectivity and value at a time when both were in a state of flux in society at large. Their poetics of landscape represent attempts to negotiate an aesthetic for the contemporary world.

### **Human/Nature: Yang Lian's Landscape**

Yang Lian was one of a group of poets associated with the non-official *Today* (*Jintian* 今天) magazine, which was published between 1978 and 1980 in Beijing. In the early 1980s this poetry was subject to sharp criticism in official journals, and it was those critics who gave the new poetry the name Obscure Poetry (*menglongshi* 朦朧詩), by which this group came to be known.<sup>3</sup> Obscure Poetry played a key role in allowing the "I" to re-enter Chinese poetry and by opening up literature as a site for exploring subjectivity. Opinions have differed, however, over the exact nature of this new

subjectivity, of the “I” and its relationship to the world. Since Obscure Poetry opposed the aesthetic of the contemporary ruling ideology, these opinions represent political, as well as aesthetic and analytical, positions.

In a defence of the new poetry, Xie Mian 謝冕 outlined how the debate over poetry intersected with modern Chinese literary and social debate over tradition versus modernity and Chinese versus Western values. This debate took on renewed urgency in the 1980s, as a result of a new push toward modernization and opening up to the international community. As Xie Mian pointed out, this problem of politics and aesthetics can also be thought of in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, the “I” and the landscape, or as he puts it the “self” (*zìwǒ* 自我) and the “world” (*shìjiè* 世界).<sup>4</sup> This interaction can also be thought of in social terms, as Wolfgang Kubin points out. He identifies the formal point of contact between Obscure Poetry and post-Obscure Chinese poetry as being a common focus on the problem of the subject and the issue of merging “personal experiences and social perspectives.”<sup>5</sup>

Maghiel van Crevel articulates the innovation of Obscure Poetry in terms of the self and the other, making the point that Obscure Poetry was important in re-establishing the “Self” as “more of an individual.” This is poetry in which “political protest is aimed at the System itself, not just its excesses, and attempts are made to ban politics from poetry altogether.” Importantly, in the 1980s emerging capitalist totalitarianism, under which the old value system was replaced by capitalist individualism, leads to the situation in which “the Catch-22 that to reject politics is a political act steadily loses its validity” (70).

“Norlang” was a central text in the controversy over Obscure Poetry. Criticism of the poem in the official press was one of the signals of the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign that began in 1983.<sup>6</sup> “Norlang” and the poem’s controversy still belong to a period when “pure” aesthetics could be very political, because of the paradox of autonomy that van Crevel points out. Yet, already in “Norlang,” Yang sought an alternative to the binary opposition, in a semiotic sense, between an autonomous, or immanent, poetics and an interactive poetics, which emphasizes connections and thus sociality. While, as critics have pointed out, there is a tendency toward the semiotic dominance of the “I” in Obscure Poetry, “Norlang” is one of a number of works that complicate the relationship of the “I” to landscape as part of a shift away from autonomous form. In this way, one can understand the politics of

Yang's poetry as advocating the individual as the basis for a new sociality. The new sociality in Yang's poetry challenged the strict boundaries of subjectivity in China, at the moment when the country was moving from collectivism to rampant individualism. This moment gave a brief opportunity, curtailed by the launch of the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign, to explore and question the middle ground between self and society. At a transitional time in China, this poetry examines the poetic potentials of boundaries, making politics and aesthetics disputed ground.

Yang's poetry from the 1980s negotiates value in a dialectic play between self and other, the "I" and the landscape. It opposes both the socialist Chinese literary system and an aesthetic of pure poetry, which was initially necessary in order to break free of the political demands of that system.<sup>7</sup> Attacks on Yang's work, particularly "Norlang," from the orthodoxy, and by post-modern criticism, exemplify the flux in value in China in the 1980s and the way Yang's poetry resists both ideological positions. The former kind of criticism attacked "Norlang" for being too obscure, and ideologically unhealthy, for being chauvinistic, and for representing "an individual overriding a whole nation and era" with a "personal wish to dominate everything," while being stuck in an "ivory tower" (Xiang 164). Kwai-Cheung Lo in a recent essay criticizes several of Yang's poems, including "Norlang," for expressing "the Enlightenment vision of man's domination over nature."<sup>8</sup> Another postmodernist commentator attacks Yang and his contemporaries for valorising "the political illusions of searching for a lost, immanent social value," and exhibiting a "monolithic monumentality."<sup>9</sup> Both forms of criticism devalue the dialectic in Yang's poetry. The totalitarian form imposes universal collective value, and the post-modern dissolves the individual and denies the possibility of universality as such.

Yang uses pre-Confucian texts and folk traditions to counteract contemporary conformist discourses such as that of the neo-Confucian movement of the 1980s, which, as Adrian Chan sees it, uses Confucian tradition to legitimise modern capitalism.<sup>10</sup> Critics have, paradoxically, misunderstood Yang's poetry as a return to tradition. Lo writes that Yang searches "for a Logos from history and a mythology that would give him the origin of Chinese culture." Lo also claims that Yang travelled around China to "the sources of Chinese civilization," which ignores the fact that he is often interested in non-Han ethnic groups and traditions. In "Norlang," which is the name of a male god in Tibetan, as well as a mountain and waterfall in Sichuan, Yang draws on a Tibetan

tradition in order to examine and complicate the assumptions of self and collective identity, and counteract the oppressive Han tradition. Nevertheless, this use of Tibetan culture is also a case of cultural appropriation and thus within the Chinese imperialist tradition. As Yang himself points out this is both an issue of appropriation and counter-appropriation: "A relationship has to be turned upside down: motherland, mother tongue and tradition are not inherent in nature but are precisely dependent upon us."<sup>11</sup> Yang's poetry has rightly been criticized for exoticism, violence and excessive masculinity, but what critics often fail to acknowledge is that it is this very cultural eclecticism and violent interaction that make the poetics of "Norlang" as a whole interactive and dynamic.

Michelle Yeh sees in Yang's "root-seeking" (*xungen* 尋根) writing, which includes "Norlang," an extension of the trope she calls "Nature's Child": "by celebrating the pristine energy of the land and the people, it endeavours to dig through thick layers of a stagnant civilization to reach and rediscover the core of its original spirit, life and beauty." Yeh sees the use of tradition and natural imagery as an effort to reach an assumed "original" beauty and refers to Yang's poem "Banpo," written concurrently with "Norlang," as exemplifying this tendency. Where she finds a falling away of tradition and the "rebirth of the individual," there is actually a complicated repetition as the phrase "having died a thousand times, I am reborn a god," in the passage that Yeh quotes, refers both to the individual overcoming tradition and renewal of tradition. Rather than getting through "civilization" to an original "nature," an on-going cycle between the two, as well as between individual and collective, takes place in the poem.<sup>12</sup>

Both Lo's characterization of Yang's "I" as Nature's master and Yeh's as "Nature's Child" tell part of the story. In "Norlang" Yang's focus is on subjectivity, on the self, but not in isolation from the world and, particularly, the natural landscape. The title of "Norlang" is the name of a waterfall, a prominent feature on the natural landscape. In the opening lines of the first section, called "Suntide" (*Richao* 日潮), three body parts of the first human being to enter the scene fuse with three elements, a "sail" (*fan* 帆), a "rock" (*yanshi* 岩石) and an "eagle" (*cangying* 蒼鷹). The movement is upwards towards the sky, which, in the form of the sun, is fusing with the earth as it sets:

高原如猛虎，焚燒於激流暴跳的萬物的海濱  
哦，祇有光，落日渾圓地向你們泛濫，大地懸空中

強盜的帆向手臂張開， 岩石向胸脯， 蒼鷹向心  
 牧羊人的孤獨被無邊起伏的灌木所吞噬  
 經幡飛揚， 那淒瀟的信仰， 悠悠凌駕於蔚藍之上  
 ("Norlang" 159)

The plateau like a raging tiger  
 burns at the shore of creation's torrent  
 Light! There is only light;  
 the setting sun floods  
 oward you  
 in a perfect sphere  
 earth hangs in space

The pirate sail opens to the arm,  
 rock to chest  
 eagle to heart  
 The shepherd's solitude swallowed  
 in the endless undulating brush  
 The prayer-flag fluttering  
 a sad, shrill faith  
 slowly rising through the azure  
 ("Norlang" 153)

The up and down oscillations mirror the continuous ebb and flow throughout "Suntide." The implied speaker, the "I," spreads out like the flooding sun to address the multitude of the "you" (*nimen* 你們), while the solitary figures of the second stanza reverse the process, moving the reader from the collective "you" back to focus on individuals. The movement between heaven and earth also breaks up the body of the "pirate" (*qiangdao* 強盜). As parts of the body are attached to parts of the natural world, these parts are spread across the landscape and, thus, both enlarge the person and tear that person apart. This can be seen in the other movement in the passage about the "pirate," the shift from the outer body inwards, from "arm" (*shoubi* 手臂) to "chest" (*xiongpu* 胸脯) to "heart" (*xin* 心), and from the seemingly innocuous "sail" to "rock" to the "eagle," a violent bird of prey. The landscape's preying on the human figure becomes more explicit when "The shepherd's solitude" (*muyangren de gudu* 牧羊人的孤獨) is "swallowed" (*tunshi* 吞噬) in the following line. Moreover, the passive verb "swallowed" is not neutral in the Chinese, but implies an adverse affect on the "shepherd's solitude."

This action also happens the other way, when the “prayer flag” (*jingfan* 經幡), a human item that symbolizes a human “faith” (*xinyang* 信仰), rises or more accurately, “encroaches” and “places itself above human concerns,” as the Chinese “lingjia” 凌駕 implies. The Chinese for “fluttering,” “feiyang” 飛揚, is more active and could be translated as “flies upwards,” making it part of the same dynamic oscillations and linking it to the eagle’s downward dive. Elements of the human and natural world are bound together and torn apart by and in the landscape and the language itself.

The breaking apart and intensification of language in Yang’s poetic also appear in the way the title, “Norlang” (*Nuorilang* 諾日朗), and the title of the first section, “Suntide” (*Richao* 日潮), embody key features of this opening passage. Firstly, the character for “waterfall” (*pu* 瀑) contains the element water, which is an important metaphor in “Suntide.” Apart from the radical for water, this character also contains the character for “violence” (*bao* 暴), which, as we have seen, is an essential part of the dynamic interaction of the opening lines and which appears as part of the word “torrent” (*jiliu putiao* 激流暴跳) in these lines. Thus, “waterfall” (*pu* 瀑) captures the violent dynamism of the poem. At the same time, the “sun” (*ri* 日), which makes the plateau “burn” (*fenshao* 焚燒) in the opening lines, is one of the Chinese characters that make up the word “Norlang” (*Nuorilang* 諾日朗), the name of the same waterfall. In the opening lines this sun is, moreover, very watery, a “torrent” that “floods” (*fanlan* 泛濫). The contradiction and conjunction between fire and water in the opening lines are, thus, contained in the title itself, as well as being present, more obviously, in the section’s title, “Suntide” (*Richao* 日潮), which contains the character for “sun” and the radical for “water.” The dynamic interplay between creation and destruction is clear in the opening line of the Chinese, where the “plateau” (*gaoyuan* 高原) “burns,” or in the Chinese, perhaps, “destroys [by fire]” (*fenshao* 焚燒) at “the shore of creation’s torrent” (*jiliu putiao de wanwu de haibin* 激流暴跳的萬物的海濱). The elements of contradiction and intensification, of creative construction and violence in the images and symbols of the poem resonate with uncertainty, with the same interplay between creation and destruction as the language itself.

After a long stanza that develops this interplay through

interacting images of humanity and nature, as well as life and death, the final stanza of “Suntide” reminds the reader of the title and name of the waterfall:

哦，光，神聖的紅袖，火的崇拜火的舞蹈  
 洗滌呻吟的溫柔，賦予蒼穹一個破碎陶罐的寧靜  
 你們終於被如此巨大的一瞬震撼了麼  
 ——太陽等著，為隕落的劫難，歡喜若狂 (“Norlang”  
 159)

Light! Sacred crimson glaze  
     fire-worship  
     fire-dance  
 Lave the soft moans  
     bestow upon the firmament  
     the tranquility of a shattered urn  
 Are you finally roused by this vast moment?  
 — the sun waits  
     in ecstasy  
     for the meteoric  
     apocalypse  
 (“Norlang” 154)

The first character of the title “Norlang” (*Nuorilang* 諾日朗) means “to reply” (*nuo* 諾). This creates the sense of replying to the sun’s brightness, or a brightness that replies to the sun. The light that bathes also recalls the combination of fire and water in the section title. The English translation “soft moans” does not capture the oxymoron of pain and warm security in the Chinese “shenyin de wenrou” 呻吟的溫柔. “Wenrou” 溫柔 implies a “peacefulness,” “passivity,” and “harmony,” as in “wenhe” 溫和, while “shenyin” 呻吟 implies “pain” and a “cry out against pain.” They are opposites brought together in a violent act on language that both mutes it and cries out against this silence.

The “sun waits” (*taiyang dengzhe* 太陽等著) for a falling from the sky, “the meteoric / apocalypse” (*yunluo de jienan* 隕落的劫難), while it itself is falling. The terrible event that it anticipates, the meeting of earth and sky, is the moment the whole poem seems to be striving for, as human and landscape words run together and towards the sky in the opening. Landscape, earth, sky, and human elements fuse and disperse themselves in a landscape of language. This language of description of landscape places the human in the



context of landscape and landscape in the context of human perception. A sense of self, of the person in landscape, comes through description of landscape, so that the human inscribes itself on landscape and is simultaneously inscribed in landscape.

Yang's poetry transgresses the boundaries of self-creation in contemporary China by both expanding the human subject and making the relationship between the human subject and the landscape problematic, hence the supposed "obscurity" of his work. "Norlang" reflects and reacts to the strict boundaries of subjectivity in China, which has moved from collectivism to rampant individualism while allowing little room for a middle ground, a questioning of self and society.

The critical reception of Obscure Poetry and of Yang's work in particular demonstrates how increasingly global intellectual disputes have impacted on local Chinese literary debates. At the same time, Yang's poetic response is also in part a reaction to global pressures. Thus, as we shall see, the formally dynamic poetry that constitutes his response has parallels in other contemporary literary contexts.

### **Residual Description: Arkadii Dragomoshchenko's Landscape**

As in China, the 1980s was a time of dramatic change in the Soviet Union. Even before *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and perhaps as a result of the political vagaries of the local Writers' Union rather than any fundamental change in Party policy, a new approach to the control of literature appeared in 1981 in Leningrad in the form of Club-81, an official institution where writers not officially recognized by the state could meet and share their work. Arkadii Dragomoshchenko took part in the months of negotiations over the conditions under which the authorities would allow the formation of such a group, which was, according to the statutes finally agreed upon, independent in aesthetic matters. A representative from the Writers' Union, however, retained "the right to a deciding vote in all club activities." To become a member of Club-81 was to accept the state politically, but it also meant to take part in an aesthetic opposition to official literature.<sup>13</sup>

Although Club-81 did not receive the same critical attention in official journals as Obscure Poetry, reviews of the club's anthology *Krug* in 1985 reveal the oppositional nature of the group's aesthetics.<sup>14</sup> The attack by Vladimir Vasil'ev on the anthology, in particular, illustrates the issues at stake.<sup>15</sup> Vasil'ev's main criticism is that the works in the anthology do not deal with "reality" (*deistvitel'nost'*), but instead with other artistic works. Vasil'ev

associates "reality" with representing national interests, and respect for literary history. The poetry in *Krug*, in his view, is elitist and the product of, amongst other things, "reactionary bourgeois ideology," "subjective idealism," "cosmopolitanism," "egoism," "hedonism," "snobbism," "decadence" (Vasil'ev 189). Vasil'ev makes an ideological attack on the anthology for not writing about the real world, while ignoring the political situation, where his view represents the aesthetic of the ruling ideology. In this case, just as in China, elitism, art for art's sake, and "pure" poetry are oppositional; they attack the role of literature as state commodity and are thus seen as dangerous.

The work of Club-81, by focusing on the process and object of art and reader, broadly aims at shifting subjectivity in aesthetics. By creating self-consciousness within the works, the works of art also enter the realm of description, of reality, so that these works are an attempt at moving subjectivity by creating a consciousness of consciousness. In so doing, of course, they face the potential contradiction that the attempt to relocate art in reality through self-referential literature might lead to the irrelevance to reality that Vasil'ev finds in the work. Nevertheless, the works in *Krug* express a belief in the necessity of not only making a political point but also of understanding reality through art; they express a desire for societal as well as political change, based on a relocation of consciousness.

At the time that Club-81 was formed, its writers lacked an international community. Like the Obscure Poets, they began to gain these links as the 1980s progressed. In 1983 the American poet Lyn Hejinian visited the Soviet Union for the first time. There she met Dragomoshchenko, and the two established an artistic relationship, which has since involved collaboration and translation of each other's work. Dragomoshchenko produced "Summa Elegia," which Hejinian then translated, as part of his contribution to a joint project that the two initiated in the early stages of their correspondence, as a response to Hejinian's *The Guard* (1984), which she dedicated to the Russian poet.

From the mid-1980s onwards, critics have sought to define Russian poetry in relation to national and international poetic tendencies, preferring, like those in Club-81, to consider literature an autonomous field of inquiry, rather than to define it by group or institutional affiliation. These definitions all emphasize two major tendencies in the underground literature from the 1970s and 1980s that they group together under the name of Russian postmodernism.

Mikhail Epstein uses the term “metarealist” to describe a maximalist line in contemporary Russian poetry that tends toward “superart and linguistic utopianism,” in contrast with the anti-art tendency, the other major trend in Russian poetry.<sup>16</sup> As such, these linguistic explorations might be expected to represent positivist attempts to create a new aesthetic, in contrast with post-modern cynicism. Epstein, however, associates Dragomoshchenko with deconstruction used as a “creative method” (210).

David Bethea also observes two tendencies. He sees a new trend toward “Western scepticism and irony,” which contrasts with the more traditional “Russian maximalist spirituality.”<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, as Bethea also notes, despite this move toward a postmodernist aesthetic, “there is a maximalism here” too (203). Dragomoshchenko’s landscape poetics seems to unite the positivism of the maximalist tendency with the scepticism and irony of the other major tendency in contemporary Russian poetry through a deconstructive-constructive method.

Vladislav Kulakov associates several of the leading poets in Club-81, such as E. Shvarts and V. Krivulin, with the maximalist line in contemporary Russian poetry, “the ‘complicated’ poetry about which people once debated so hotly.” Kulakov considers the “notorious ‘complexity’ of these writers” the result of “stress on the authorial word, on the profoundly personal and, as a rule, extrasocial lyrical mythology.” This kind of poetry, as Kulakov sees it, is “an expression of general postmodernist thought with respect to the possibility of direct utterance,” under which the “problem of the ‘sign’ and the ‘significance’ becomes [...] the constant motif of the lyrical reflex.”<sup>18</sup> O. I. Severskaia also discusses the metarealist poetics of Dragomoshchenko and others in linguistic terms, pointing out the importance of French post-structuralism to his work.<sup>19</sup> Metarealism or “Meta-literature,” as Severskaia describes it, is the “mastery of the means of narration with the simultaneous description of the language of description” (541).

Critics point out the creative-deconstructive play of language describing language in Dragomoshchenko’s work, but often fail to emphasize that this arises from an investigation into describing the world, through a study of landscape. Another metarealist poet, Solov’ev, emphasizes that metarealism also resists the post-modern ideology of language as a play of signifiers with no room for agency, describing metaliterature as “the only path at present that offers movement without which literature will be forced to follow the flow of language, ossifying in ideology” (qtd. Severskaia 541). Description of language is integral to description of landscape,

because in Dragomoshchenko's poetry the world includes the words that describe it. In Dragomoshchenko's work there is thus a formal parallel with the dynamic interaction between person and landscape, which is enacted and described in Yang's poem "Norlang." By describing its own process of description of landscape, Dragomoshchenko's poem "Summa Elegia" also attempts a more responsive description and enactment of the person in landscape, through the performative nature of the poetic text, to create an interactive consciousness of consciousness.

"Summa Elegia" is exemplary of Dragomoshchenko's landscape poetics. The dialectic between intensification and dilution occurs in the description of landscape in Dragomoshchenko's poem "Observation of a Fallen Leaf as the 'Ultimate Basis' of Landscape (a Reading)" (*Nabliudenie padaiushchego lista, vziatoe v kachestve poslednego obosnovaniia peizazha [chtenie]*) from "Summa Elegia." A landscape of language mirrors a landscape of consciousness. The poem develops and elaborates the description as a problem of perception. The second and final part of the poem begins with a quotation concerning these themes from Hejinian's *The Guard*:

The landscape is a moment of time  
that has gotten in position.  
(*The Guard* 11)

The poem mediates the leaf of the title through visual sensation and the language of the poem in a non-ironic attempt at description. This description suffers increasing problems of mediation, of language, as the poem progresses. Finally, the language, which is always heavy in phonetic associations and wordplay, breaks down and observes itself:

И вновь клеймит прозрачность вещество.  
Всего-то литера поверхности, лицо,  
след всех следов, ячейка всех сетей.  
Всего-то выбор литеры, ничто,  
идушее навыворот себя  
за пробуждением в пред-ложье предложения.  
(*"Summa elegii"* 23)

And once again transparency marks matter...  
No more than a letter on the surface, a face,  
All traces' trace, the cell of all nets. Only a choice letter,  
Nothing,  
After turning itself inside out on waking

in the bed of the sentence.  
 ("Summa Elegia" 46)

The poem moves towards its end in the self-realization that it is merely words, "a letter on the surface" (*litera poverkhnosti*). Description of the leaf gives way to psychological description and to language describing itself. The sentence about nothing really does, as it claims, contain a "nothing" (*nichto*), which is in "the sentence" (*predlozhenie*). The Russian word "pred-lozh'e," which appears as "bed" in translation, is a compound neologism that is derived from the word "predlog," "pretext" or "preposition," by the addition of a suffix that gives the word a spatial connotation. Thus the preposition "v," "into," is followed by a word denoting the space of the preposition, enacting the process of movement through reading and prepositions. The word "pred-lozh'e" also provides a "pretext" (*predlog*) for the "proposition" and the "sentence," both of which the Russian word "predlozhenie" denotes. The words describe themselves, their relationship to other words, and the sentence as a whole. This reveals the dislocations in language focused on description, and subjectivity focused on location, on its position in landscape. As Dragomoshchenko puts it, "everything is residue of its own description."<sup>20</sup>

"Kitchen Elegy" (*Kukhonnaia elegiia*) is another study in "Summa Elegia" that plays on the residual effects of description of landscape. Firstly, the opening lines of the poem seem to describe an antagonistic relationship between the subject and the natural winter landscape. The striving for "perfection of form" (*sovershenstvo formy*) is defeated in and by the strong images of snow, red berries, and blood, which seems to be a result of either stomping on the berries or the prick of a needle. This violence is inherent in the switching and mixing of genres and words of description in the language itself and in the image that the language gives up. Further on in the poem, this process of contradiction and coalescence turns to the problem of memory in description of landscape. Finally, the uncertain relationship between form and content in landscape emerges as a central theme in the poem:

Чай жил птенцом в узорной клетке чашки,  
 в окне пустырь кружил—в его оправе,

Tea like a phoenix fledgling dwelled in the cup's patterned  
 cage.

The vacant lot swirled in the window—in its frame,

The first of the two lines here makes sense, or can be made sense of, through the polysemous nature of the words used. The “tea” (*chai*) is in a “cup” (*chashka*) that is “patterned” (*kletka*). The Russian word “*kletka*” specifically implies a crisscross patterning and is also the word for “birdcage.” The two senses of the word thus make sense of the simile “like a phoenix,” and the Russian “like a fledgling” (*ptentsom*). In both birds inhere a sense of potential. The phoenix rises from the ashes, and the “fledgling” will grow to maturity. Similarly the words “phoenix” and “*ptentsa*” only come into being through the simile with “tea,” the frame of reference of the poem, and the frame of the pattern in the cup.

The frames of reference, like the senses, are constantly switching or twisting in the poem. Although the poem previously described an outdoor landscape, the location of the subject has now been declared as inside a house, as the title, “Kitchen Elegy,” suggests. This subject is in the container of a house, just as the tea is in the teacup. At the same time, however, the description and the change of perspective swing this into reverse. “The vacant lot” (*pustyri*) is “in its frame” (*v ego oprave*). Both the outside landscape and the tea would be amorphous without their respective framing devices, a window frame and a cup. The “*kletka*” is also a trapping, framing device not only when read as a “cage” but also when read as a “pattern,” because the process of seeing and describing, just like the problem of framing, brings up the power relationship between subject and object, between framer and framed. Positioning makes both subject and landscape. Simultaneously, it leads to a play between the two, each defined by and defining the other.

The poem ends with another switching of perspectives. The wind outside, a part of the landscape that has been described, disturbs the subject’s meditation on observation and description of that landscape. This feedback leads to another refraction. The subject reflects on the treating of “the object” (*predmeta*):

Но веял в волосах сквозняк, мешая утренней науке  
зеницы, суженной побегом лучевым,  
рот обучать опять терпению предмета,  
узлы вязать и не читать по ним.  
(“*Summa elegii*” 8)

And a draft was stirring my hair, interfering  
with the eye’s morning studies  
narrowed against the sharp rays  
To teach the mouth again to be patient with the object,

To tie knots, not to decipher them.  
 ("Summa Elegia" 34)

The translation here misses another framing device, the bookish nature of the language, which defies a reading of the poem as an unmediated account of surroundings, just as the moving perspectives deny any one perspective primacy. This bookish language is apparent in the old-fashioned "zenitsa," which translates as "eye" or "pupil." This double meaning is productive, as the word has the sense of both a black centre and whole eye with its white. This is important to the play between form and content in the poem as a whole.

A double movement is also present in the influence of the "draft" (*skvozniak*), which, the Russian "meshat" implies, not only "interferes" or "prevents" the "eye's morning studies" (*utrenniaia nauka / zhenity*) from teaching the mouth and tying knots but also "agitates" it. There is also a mixing implied here by the word "meshat," so that the poem enacts the mixing of perspective by interaction between subject and object. At the same time, it describes this action through the "draft," which is part of the "object," the "hair" (*volosy*), which is part of the subject.

The bookishness of the language, moreover, interferes with the description of the act of description, which the reference to "the mouth" (*rot*) suggests is oral. The final line describes this tying of knots in the description that it follows. The Russian "chitat" contains a suggestion of written language that is more explicit than the English translation "decipher." "Chitat," is the Russian verb "to read," but in this case it has the figurative sense of "to perceive" or "to guess." This verb turns the object, the landscape or outside scene of description, into a landscape of letters, which is the poem itself. Thus, another "knot" (*uzel*), or layer, concludes the poem in a rejection of the reading that has just occurred. The poem describes and enacts a perceptual act of description in a consciousness of consciousness.

Dragomoshchenko's "Summa Elegia" explores the concentration and bifurcation of meanings in a landscape of language. "Observation of a Fallen Leaf" explores the residual effects of language focused on its own description, and subjectivity focused on its position in landscape. "Kitchen Elegy" develops this exploration of residue, investigating the various frames through which we perceive the world, from windows to language itself. "Summa Elegia" is an attempt to transgress the social, political reality of everyday life in the Soviet Union by exploring subjectivity

in landscape through observation and description of the world, as well as the language that describes this landscape. This leads to a complication of the relationship between subject and object. Language describes itself, enacting a consciousness of consciousness that is not only an attempt to escape the oppressive everyday subjectivity of Soviet life and literature, by crossing inward boundaries of language, but also an attempt to describe the wider world and renegotiate subjectivity in the Soviet Union's changing cultural and social environment.

Like Yang's work, Dragomoshchenko's poetry deals dynamically with the person in landscape in order to renegotiate social and cultural value. Where Yang's play involves the person and the natural world, however, Dragomoshchenko focuses on the experiencing of something from a certain perspective or within a certain frame that is constitutive of subjectivity. As we shall see, Lyn Hejinian also exploits the interaction between form and content that comes with any perspective. In particular, she explores the relationship between words as containers of meaning and as content in themselves. She does this in order to enact the analogy between the person in landscape, or in social context, and the word, particularly the word "I," in the formal plane of language. Hejinian's formal exploration is also, like the poetry of Yang and Dragomoshchenko, a reaction to increasingly interrelated local and global political and socio-cultural landscapes.

### **Formal Horizons: Lyn Hejinian's Landscape**

American Language Poetry grew out of a dissatisfaction and disillusionment with ideas of direct, political and artistic opposition that drove 1960s counter-culture. As Jerome McGann points out, despite widespread agreement that in the early 1970s a change took place in society, politics and literature, Language Poetry offered one of the few genuine attempts in poetry to come to terms with this new era, by a negotiating a new way of writing that sought to counter the perceived complicity in imperialist politics of all mainstream discourse.<sup>21</sup> McGann sums up the located and interactive landscape poetics of the Language Poets: "these writers deploy an archaeology which does not stand in an objective and superior relation to the fields they are exploring" (637).

While Obscure Poetry reintroduced the "I" to Chinese poetry, Language Poetry subjected the dominant concept of an authentic self to rigorous questioning. Language Poets saw this focus on self as "a reductive approach, and one with political consequences."<sup>22</sup> In the United States, where politics and poetry were widely



assumed to belong to unconnected realms, the Language Poets in their theoretical writings and manifestoes challenged the status quo by attacking what they perceived as the political conservatism of mainstream poetry. While in China and the Soviet Union separating aesthetics and politics was an oppositional and therefore, paradoxically, a political move, in the United States the opposite was true: to assert the interrelationship between aesthetics and politics was oppositional.

In the early to mid-1980s Language Poetry began to gain more public exposure, provoking criticism of their linking of politics and aesthetics, as well as their unorthodox poetic methods. At the same time, their integration into the literary institutions of mainstream journals, publishing houses, and literary criticism also made their oppositional stance more problematic.<sup>23</sup> The publication of *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, a group anthology from a university press, was one of number of events that marked 1984 as a watershed year for Language Poetry in this regard.<sup>24</sup> The debate that took place amongst poets with competing poetics in 1984 in San Francisco just prior to the publication of Lyn Hejinian's *The Guard* illustrates the issues at stake. The group of Language poets based in the San Francisco Bay area, which included Hejinian, took one side in this "poetry war."<sup>25</sup>

This "war" began in June and, as De Villo Sloan describes it, centred around two terms of abuse that related to aesthetic position: "crude mechanical access" and "crude personism." The Language poets were accused of the former crime for their supposed denial of the self in the poem, to which they opposed a conception of the socially constructed self under heavy influence from the Frankfurt School and French post-structuralism. This attack raised issues surrounding the problem of the post-modern aesthetic of the totally de-centred self, which in effect denies the value of the individual and collapses universal value into particularity, a celebration of difference as such. On the other hand, Language poets, in particular Ron Silliman, accused the mainstream American poetry of being naive in its assumption of self-expression in language, which was advocated for its humanism and championing of freewill and imagination. For the Language poets, the aesthetic of most mainstream contemporary poetry in the United States, which assumed an inner voice, an identity unique and inseparable from all other entities, was also the aesthetic of conservative rhetoric, which has a narrow definition of what constitutes both a normal individual, and universal value.

The polemic over "crude personism" and "crude mechanism"

thus went beyond the poetics and politics of Language Poetry to raise issues of more general concern amongst left-leaning intellectuals to the point where an opponent called Silliman the "Secretary-General of the Language Party" (Sloan 252). For Hejinian, a year after her first trip to the Soviet Union, dubbed the "Evil Empire" by Ronald Reagan, and with ongoing contact from that time with the Russian poet Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, the echoes of McCarthyism must have been chilling.

David Levi Strauss, another participant in the debate, pointed out that the argument over Language Poetry illustrated the importance and danger of setting boundaries for both the group and the self. The simultaneously protective and restrictive functions of boundaries, both in politics and form, are the subject of *The Guard*. The guard of the title both protects and restricts, or guides and restricts, a person's relationship to the world. Hejinian sees this guiding and guarding as inherent in words and the people who use them.<sup>26</sup> Her poetics in *The Guard* enact a socially and materially located person through this interplay of restriction and interaction in words. As with the poetry of Yang and Dragomoshchenko, this can be seen as opposing two aesthetic, ethical, or philosophical positions, "crude personism" and "crude mechanism," in an attempt to negotiate a new subjectivity through a poetics of landscape.

Peter Nicholls identifies this poetics with Hejinian's concept of "phenomenology."<sup>27</sup> This concept is a "crystallization of ideas present in the poems up to *The Guard*" (242). Nicholls follows Hejinian's own statements in defining phenomenology, in the context of *The Guard*, as including "the perceiver, perception (or perceiving), perceived, and the various meanings of their relationships" (qtd. 242). This phenomenological poetics is the interactive poetics of the "I" in language and the person in landscape. This interaction is a "middle ground, where we are somehow caught between the generalizing, abstracting quality of language, on the one hand, and an engagement with the localized forms of a particular perceptual world on the other" (Nicholls 243). Hejinian's landscape poetics draws parallels between language and landscape that emphasize interaction with and responsibility to the world at large.

Hejinian's poetry, like Dragomoshchenko's, explores the feedback effect from the things that one describes, the dialectic role of the person as both framer of and framed in landscape. This is why Stein's concept of landscape is important to her poetics. The composition is for Stein the landscape. Things described, as

Hejinian quotes, are like Stein's "saints":

All saints that I made and I made a great number of them  
because after all a great many pieces of things are a landscape  
all these saints together made my landscape.<sup>28</sup>

The interplay between that which is made and that which makes relates to the complex, contradictory relationship between form and content in *The Guard*:

[...] This intention to write  
turns into a letter. A strong mawkish blue

and blunt, but not yet foreground  
(it is delightful being somewhere else  
but far from close enough).  
A lightbulb shines under waving incoming  
of the sun. The storm implodes, withdrawing

to its center, and momentarily magnifies  
the morning light. The wind comes up blowing  
paper scraps and dry grass in eddies  
at the edge of the school ground  
into the cyclone fence.  
The lining of its chain and candid wall.  
Geometric and detective. More like pilings

than a pitcher, form is ...(families  
are stable, friendships mobile).  
(*The Guard* 35)

The quotation above begins with a pun. An intention to write, when put into practice, becomes words, which consist of letters. An intention to write a poem, particularly one, like *The Guard*, which is dedicated to a friend, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, might also turn into a letter to a person. Hejinian, writing about *The Guard*, refers to Tynianov's term "oscillating sign."<sup>29</sup> She gives the pun as an example of such a sign, which she describes as a sign where two meanings of the sign "jostle for primacy" (Hejinian, "Language and Paradise" 79). Letters of the Roman alphabet are the smallest units of the English writing system. They are the content of all English writing. At the same, the epistolary genre is one form of writing in English. The oscillating writing sign "letter," then, oscillates between content and form in a landscape of language and, as a

word, sits somewhere in between the smallest particle and the larger unit of language to which it refers.

The "cyclone fence" foregrounds this uncertain relationship between contents and container in a description of landscape. The wind contains "paper scraps and dry grass," yet this content is what makes the movement of the wind visible, so that it is not only the formal organizer of the contents, the "paper scraps and dry grass," but itself becomes the subject, the contents, of the sentence. The "cyclone fence," like the wind after which it is named, oscillates between form and content. It contains the school ground and the "paper scraps and dry grass" that the wind blows into it. The fence holds the visible representation of the wind, while allowing the wind to pass through it. The "misinterpretation" of the name "cyclone fence" focuses attention on the contradictory, humorous nature of a container, the particularity of which rests in how it does not contain. The word "cyclone" contains a similar contradiction. The focal point of this intense wind pattern, or form, the eye of the cyclone, is a point of calm.

The focus on body and surface, content and form, develops further in the lines that immediately follow "the cyclone fence." The patterning form of this "fence" comes into focus in the description of the "wall" and the word "geometric." These words remind one of the formal, crisscrossing structure of the "cyclone fence." This grid pattern is also the kind of pattern that Hejninian sees between the synchronic and diachronic, between space and time ("Two Stein Talks" 116-7).

The "cyclone fence" is a "wall," a wall of lines, and in this sense is "geometric." The fence is a formal structure that contains space, but is also a pattern, a regular arrangement of lines. Like Dragomoshchenko's teacup, it is both a patterning and a container. "More like pilings," a foundational structure, "than a pitcher," a single container.

It is the combination of spatial and temporal axes that make up the overall form of *The Guard*. The form of the sentence with "form" is not atypical in crossing not only lines but also a stanza. In this sentence, each line anticipates the next line and depends upon the previous one. The sentence fulfils the expectation of comparison in the phrase "more like pilings" and of some sort of statement following the word "families." The ellipsis marks, however, confound the anticipation of a full statement in the middle line of the sentence. Each of the final words could also refer back to the previous part of the line, so that the indirect relationships of phrases and the poem's form, the line, sentence

and stanza structure, encourage multiple associations. As Hejinian puts it in reference to Gertrude Stein's writing, "it is the convergence of these elements—that is, space and time—with language that provides the excitement of grammar" ("Two Stein Talks" 113). This is what Hejinian describes as Stein's landscape: "landscape is a temporal-spatial configuration and language operates within it" ("Two Stein Talks" 122).

Boundaries also imply the searching of a frontier landscape, an exploration of limits. The stanza that begins with the end of the "form" sentence relates to this theme:

than a pitcher, form is... (families  
are stable, friendships mobile).  
Burdened with errands the horizon banded with gray,  
the abutment hung  
(out of uneasiness at having to go ahead).  
I wonder, is her mind the greater pleasure. The one  
galloping up with flowers on the little table.  
(*The Guard* 35)

To reach a limit, or "horizon," for it to become a place of joining, of touching, involves a movement "ahead." This involves uncertainties, "uneasiness," difficulty and a state of apprehension, in the sense of grasping, or understanding, and in the sense of being in uncertainty. A touching also implies a separation, which explains the "uneasiness." The word "ahead," which implies a movement to a point of contact, also hints at a violent breaking apart. The "hung" at the end of previous line might be read as grammatical error for the past tense "hanged." The word "ahead" at the end of the next line, then, implies a gruesome end in its own breaking apart into "a head." This blurs the boundaries between the person in landscape and words in a landscape of language.

The "I" is exemplary of the blurring of the boundaries between person, landscape and language in *The Guard*. According to Hejinian, the beginning of a new sentence on the same line implies an association. She explains her understanding of this by pointing out the association between "I" and "first" in the line "The full moon falls on the first. I." She also points out that the "one" in the opening line of *The Guard*, "Can one take captives by writing," is the "I" ("Language and Paradise" 61–2). The movement between first and third person in language parallels the movement between the person as framer of and framed in landscape.

The "I," the "one" that begins the poem and accompanies the

reader throughout it, appears again in the last two lines of the stanza quoted above. The "I" here involves itself in speculative inquiry. This involves an objective third person subject, "her mind." This is similar to the matching of "I" with the third person "one," which as an Arabic numeral resembles the "I." This "one" occurs again in the same line, which parallels the line with "I" and "first." This is the "I" in self-reflection, caught, or read, in the act of wondering, or "one-dering." This reading, this breaking down of words into smaller units of meaning, reveals each word is itself an arrangement, a form. At the same time it draws attention to the erring "flow" in "flowers."

The focus on the "I" here also relates to problems of mind and body, of psychology and of gender issues. Paradoxically, the representation of "I" by the word "one" breaks down its oneness by giving it many forms; it makes it flow and err. The movement to the third person, the objectification of the "I," also challenges ideas of subjectivity, of a unified self. The use of the feminine pronoun "her" in this context is also a political statement that associates this kind of plural "I" with the feminine. The focus on "her mind" stands in relation to the body, and a point of view that might "take his pleasure of her." This writing about thinking, about the mind, offers a political alternative process, which it also enacts in a bifurcating, feminine "I." The thought, or writing, situates itself in space and time; it is on one "plane of consciousness," one line of the poem. The plane of consciousness takes place in between the boundaries of the person's consciousness, in between the border guards "I" and "one," between framer and framed, form and content, person and landscape. The social and linguistic combine. In Hejinian's view, "language is a pre-eminently social medium"; it takes place between things in a landscape of language and of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Hejinian's writing crosses boundaries in American poetry by transgressing the social and political. The conventional, tightly-bounded concept of self, which supports the social and political orthodoxy, is to some extent broken down by *The Guard*. On the other hand, the poem also constructs a new way of conceiving of subjectivity through the interaction of content and form, the "I" and language, the person and landscape. The landscape is not only guarded over, or objectified, but is also an active guard, the active subject of the poem. "The landscape" as "a moment of time that has gotten in position" is constantly in motion in the temporal reading and writing processes. Thus, the landscape is only actualised in the subjective movement of consciousness. This

creates the problematic border territory of *The Guard*.

### Transgressing Boundaries

"Norlang," "Summa Elegia," and *The Guard* all highlight the problematic nature of lyric as landscape and of description in landscape with specific boundary-crossing effects. The different roles that landscape plays in the poetics of the three poets reflect the different contexts of their poetry. The political, social, and aesthetic landscapes in which they operate mean that the boundaries they cross also differ. Nevertheless, all three poems and poets take part in a debate over subjectivity. By disrupting "normal" relationships between subject and object, person and landscape, the poems in different ways enact the process of describing, and thus of being conscious. This consciousness of consciousness allows the human subject to take a less privileged role in the poem, while also asserting a new kind of subjectivity in language. The three poems allow both landscape and subject to emerge and interrelate without one being simply a device for expression of the other. The issue here is not just one of making the "I" uncertain, but of loosening and relocating the "I" of subjectivity in order to make it dynamic and contextually contingent, while also preserving the subjective self as a site for action. Thus, changing the subjective "I" also involves changing the grounds of the debate, the landscape where the "I" is located. For the three poets, then, this relocation of subjectivity expresses a desire to shift the grounds of debate in society at large.

I began this essay with a quotation from Gertrude Stein:

What is a landscape  
A landscape is what when they that is I  
See and look

Stein's poem poses the question: "what is a landscape?" The reply illustrates the kind of landscape subjectivity that this essay addresses. The "I" that follows in explanation is representative of an aesthetic that follows from the philosophical position that the "I" is a necessary part of the landscape, as language is a necessary part of the world we know. The combination of particles and pronouns in the reply draw attention to their value as signifiers, as well as the things they denote, which remain indeterminate in the strange structure of the poem. Thus the "I" in the poem is both wrenched from any association with the self and, as a necessary part

of "landscape," the "I" becomes essential to the self, as it denotes the subjective experience of description of landscape and being in the world.

This radical immanence, which is also necessarily in context, raises an issue of central importance to the poetry of all three writers: do we think of poetry as an immanent object or as social product? This question brings me to one final point: the shared transgression of the boundaries of normal subjectivity is only part of the globalisation of poetry that is emerging in the poetry of these three writers. There are two related but separate kinds of convergence here. The first is a convergence in the poetic function as socially defined, which I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. This is the result of convergence in social and political issues, specifically, the kind of economic and political globalisation hastened by the opening up of China and the Soviet Union to the West in the 1980s. The second is a formal convergence that is based on human universals, particularly universals inherent in language, and in verbal art in particular. All three poets exploit and transgress structural binaries between form and content, between immanent and contextual value of words in their poetry. Such a poetics makes the place of each word in the landscape of language uncertain. These convergences, at the social and formal level, are not isolated, but interact. As we have seen, formal innovation can have political resonance, and political stances can have formal expressions. Globalisation happens in poetry when the relationships between the form and social functions of poetry in different societies begin to converge. What I believe we are observing here is this very double convergence.

The flux in value in China, the Soviet Union, and the United States in the 1980s gave Yang Lian, Lyn Hejinian and Arkadii Dragomoshchenko an acute awareness of the need to assert new notions of subjectivity in poetry. As a result of common issues in this shift in value, the local and global contexts of these attempts to redefine subjectivity interact. The landscape poetics of "Norlang," "Summa Elegia" and *The Guard* challenge conventional notions of consciousness in an attempt to negotiate a form of subjectivity distinct from both the unbridled power of a conservative aesthetic of totalitarian universalism, and a deconstructive, "post-modern" aesthetic of the market. These poems resist convention not only at the social level of subjectivity but also at the level of form. Through their specific and shared social and formal issues, these poems play a dynamic role in local and global culture. The poetry of Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Lyn Hejinian, and Yang Lian maps out



possibilities for a new global poetic on the cultural landscape.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gertrude Stein, *Stanzas in Meditation*, *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, ed. Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), 119.
- <sup>2</sup> Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, "Summa elegii," *Nebo sootvetstviu* [The Corresponding Sky] (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 5-28, trans. as "Summa Elegia," *Description*, trans. Lyn Hejinian and Elena Balashova (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1990), 23-51; Lyn Hejinian, *The Guard, The Cold of Poetry* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1994), 11-37, rpt. of *The Guard* (Berkeley, CA: Tuumba, 1984); Yang Lian 楊煉, "Nuorilang" 諾日朗, *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 23 (1985), 159-61, trans. as "Norlang," trans. Alisa Joyce and John Minford, *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 23 (1985), 153-8.
- <sup>3</sup> For a good outline of the origins and development of Obscure Poetry, see Maghiel van Crevel, *Language Shattered: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Duoduo* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996). This article follows Maghiel van Crevel's reasoning in using "Obscure Poetry," instead of the more common "Misty Poetry," to translate the Chinese *menglongshi* (73).
- <sup>4</sup> Xie Mian 謝冕, "Duanlie yu qingxie: tuibianqi de touying" 斷裂與傾斜：蛻變期的投影 [Rupture and skewing: Projections of a Period of Transformation] *Menglongshi lunzhan ji* 朦朧詩論戰集 [Anthology of Articles from the Obscure Poetry Debate], ed. Yao Jiahua 姚家華 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989), 408-25.
- <sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Kubin, "The End of the Prophet: Chinese Poetry between Modernity and Postmodernity," *Inside Out: Modernism and Postmodernism in Chinese Literary Culture*, ed. Wendy Larson and Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1993), 31.
- <sup>6</sup> For a general account of this criticism see Xiang Chuan 向川, "Differing Views on Yang Lian's Recent Works," trans. Zhu Zhiyu, *Renditions* 23 (1985), 164-5. See also Yao Jiahua 姚家華, ed., *Menglongshi lunzhan ji* 朦朧詩論戰集 [Anthology of Articles from the Obscure Poetry Debate] (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989).
- <sup>7</sup> For an extensive study of this system, see Perry Link, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

- 8 Kwai-Cheung Lo, "Writing the Otherness of Nature: Chinese Misty Poetry and the Alternative Modernist Practice," *Tamkang Review*, 29 (1998), 113.
- 9 Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 122, and "Epilogue: Postmodernism and Postsocialist Society—Historicizing the Present," *Postmodernism and China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 401.
- 10 Adrian Chan, "Confucianism and Deng's China," *Modernization of the Chinese Past*, ed. Mabel Lee and A. D. Syrokomla-Stefanowska (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1993), 16–24.
- 11 Yang Lian, "Poet without a Nation," trans. Brian Holton, *Index on Censorship* 3 (1997), 153.
- 12 Michelle Yeh, "Nature's Child and the Frustrated Urbanite: Expressions of the Self in Contemporary Chinese Poetry," *World Literature Today* 65 (1991), 407.
- 13 An account of the establishment of Club-81 and the club's statutes were printed in the samizdat journal *Chasy* [Hours/Clock] 35 (1982), 292–97.
- 14 Krug, (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985).
- 15 Vladimir Vasil'ev, "Sredi mirazhei i prizrakov: Obshchie razmyshleniia po chastnomu povodu" [Amidst Mirages and Apparitions: General Thoughts on a Particular Subject], rev. of Krug, *Nash sovremennik* 8 (1986), 181–90.
- 16 Mikhail Epstein, "A Catalog of the New Poetries," trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar, *Re-Entering the Sign: Articulating New Russian Culture*, ed. Ellen E. Berry and Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 209.
- 17 David M. Bethea, "Literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, ed. Nicholas Rzhevsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 202.
- 18 Vladislav Kulakov, "What's Needed Is Lyricism," trans. Marion Schwartz, *Russian Social Science Review* 35 (1994), 89.
- 19 O. I. Severskaia, "Metarealizm. Iazyk poeticheskoi shkoly: sotsiolekt-idiolekt/idiostil'" [Metarealism. The Language of a Poetic School: Sociolect–Idiolect/Idiostyle], *Ocherki istorii iazyka russkoi poezii XX veka: Opyty opisaniia idiostilei* [Studies in the History of the Language of Russian Poetry in the Twentieth Century: Attempts at the Description of Idiostyles] (Moscow: Nasledie, 1995), 541–57.
- 20 Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, "On the Superfluous," *Boundary* 2 26 (1999), 97.
- 21 Jerome McGann, "Contemporary Poetry, Alternate Routes," *Critical Inquiry* 13 (1987), 624–47.
- 22 Lee Bartlett, "What Is 'Language Poetry'?" *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986), 745.

- 23 In addition to the articles by McGann and Bartlett, a number of articles and books that attempted to define Language Poetry and debate the group's importance, both from within and outside the group, appeared between 1984 and 1989, marking Language Poetry's problematic entrance into the critical mainstream. See: Don Byrd, "Language Poetry, 1971-1986," *Sulfur* 20 (1987), 149-57; The Editors, "On Language Poetry," *Rethinking Marxism* 1 (1988), 69-76; Michael Greer, "Ideology and Theory in Recent Experimental Writing, or the Naming of 'Language Poetry,'" *Boundary 2* 16 (1989), 335-55; George Hartley, *Textual Politics and the Language Poets*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Hank Lazer, "Radical Collages," *The Nation* 247 (1988), 24-6; David Lloyd, "Limits of a Language of Desire," *Poetics Journal* 5 (1985), 159-67; Marjorie Perloff, "The Word as Such: L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry in the Eighties," *American Poetry Review* 13 (1984): 15-22, rpt. in *The Dance of the Intellect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 215-38; Joan Retallack, "The MetaPhysick of Play: L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E U.S.A.," *Parnassus* 12 (1984), 213-44; Andrew Ross, "The New Sentence and the Commodity of Form: Recent American Writing," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Ron Silliman, Carla Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, Steve Benson, Bob Perelman, and Barrett Watten, "Aesthetic Tendency and the Politics of Poetry," *Social Text* 7 (1988), 261-75.
- 24 Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, eds., *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).
- 25 The description of this debate comes from De Villos Sloan, "'Crude Mechanical Access' or 'Crude Personism': A Chronicle of One San Francisco Bay Area Poetry War," *Sagetrieb* 4 (1985), 241-54.
- 26 Lyn Hejinian, "Comments for Manuel Brito," *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 196.
- 27 "Phenomenal Poetics: Reading Lyn Hejinian," *Postwar American Poetry: The Mechanics of the Mirage*, ed. Christine Pagnouille and Michel Delville (Liège: Université de Liège, 2000), 241-52.
- 28 Gertrude Stein, "Plays," *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, ed. Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), 267, qtd. Lyn Hejinian, "Two Stein Talks," *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 111.
- 29 Yuri Tynianov, *The Problem of Verse Language*, tr. and ed. Michael Sosa and Brent Harvey (Ann Arbor: Arbis, 1981), 64, qtd. Hejinian, "Language and 'Paradise,'" *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 79.

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<sup>30</sup> Lyn Hejinian, "Barbarism," *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 323.